

## MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE BOARD

# PAROLE NEWS

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JUNE, 2007



The seven members of the Massachusetts Parole Board stand together on Monday, June 25, the first day for new member Mark A. Conrad, a former patrolman with the Milton Police Department. (from left) Mark A. Conrad, Doris Dottridge, Maureen E. Walsh, Candace Kochin, Deborah McDonagh, Pamela Lombardini, and Thomas Merigan.

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### New Board Member Strives to Enrich Parole's Public Image, Enhance Community Reintegration

This month, former Milton patrolman Mark A. Conrad filled the seventh position on the Massachusetts Parole Board, vacated in May by 14-year Board veteran Daniel Dewey. Citing a skill set that melds law enforcement, social services, and faith, Mr. Conrad says he sought membership on the Board because he has the necessary experience and perspective for the job.

With a range of experiences particularly well-suited to community reintegration, Mr. Conrad hopes to increase understanding among members of the public about the agency and the public services it provides. His five-year term will expire in June 2012.

A Milton resident, Mr. Conrad served as a uniform patrolman in the town's police department since 1992. He was a D.A.R.E.

summer camp counselor and owns his own security and personal protection business—WESCON Personal Protection, Inc. Mr. Conrad started the business almost seven years ago, and said that running it has been a "life quest." He and his business partner are longtime friends who went to the same high school and college, were roommates, and played sports together.

"We started doing escort work for people who had a need in personal protection, like pro athletes, and did bodyguard work for them. Because we did work for these athletes, they would refer other folks, and we got a reputation for professionalism." This reputation helped the company garner work for the Roxbury Film Festival (*continued on p. 3*)

## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

### PAROLE BOARD CHAIRMAN MAUREEN E. WALSH

This month, we highlighted the work of the Urban Institute in analyzing parole revocations. The study, a joint effort by the DOC and Parole Board, will assist the agency in further analyzing and considering what particular factors add to or detract from successful offender re-entry. This study should prove to be useful to most in the agency—whether it be transitional staff making recommendations to the Board Members; Board Members who are considering whether a particular offender should be re-released on parole; or field officers who are often making daily adjustments to an offender's reentry plan to ensure success.

Research projects such as the one being conducted by the Urban Institute are critical to our core mission. First, in order to improve our agency's operations, we must be trans-

parent in the very manner in which we carry out our job. It is only then that analysts can truly study the particular issue before them and have reliable results. Second, while it is clear that many in our field are doing a terrific job every day to ensure public safety, the amount of literature and studies on parole and, more importantly, parole revocations, is growing. We can learn from what others in our own state and other states are experiencing when it comes to research. Third, research most often validates and memorializes what we know instinctually to be true. For example, we believe that those offenders under supervision fare better than those who leave incarceration with neither the support nor structure in the community. An analysis of the data supports the mission of the Parole



Board, to safely and effectively supervise offenders in the community.

I appreciate the care and honesty that the focus groups gave to this project and I am looking forward to sharing the results!

## URBAN INSTITUTE STUDY EXAMINES TECHNICAL VIOLATIONS, RECIDIVISM AMONG MA INMATES

The Urban Institute is conducting an analysis of the psychological and circumstantial factors that lead to recidivism among inmates in Massachusetts Department of Correction custody. By distinguishing between recidivists incarcerated for a new crime and those locked up for technical violations, the study also aims to identify the factors that result in

in returns on technical violations and their use as a preventative and disciplinary tool among parole officers. The study, which began in November 2005 and will wrap up by the end of this year is being funded through the Executive Office of Public Safety by the Edward Byrne/Justice Assistance Grant Program.

The Urban Institute, a non-profit research, policy, and education organization based in Washington D.C., sought to work with Rhiana Kohl, DOC's Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Research, and Parole Board Chairman Maureen E. Walsh after their successful collaboration on the study "Prisoner Reentry in Massachusetts,

which provides an overview of the nature and scope of reentry in Massachusetts as part of the National Governor's Association Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy, said Lisa E. Brooks, Research Associate for the Urban Institute.

Ms. Brooks is helping to lead the latest DOC/Parole study, (*continued on p. 5*)

## ***ROUGHLY FORTY JOB SEEKERS ATTEND PAROLE-SPONSORED JOB FAIR AT LYNN CAREER CENTER***



Gregory Bunn of the Lynn Career Development Center (left) with Christopher Foster, Massachusetts Parole Board Job Specialist converse at a career fair in Lynn this month. According to Parole Board Director of Re-employment Dave Sullivan, about 40 job seekers attended. Two of them were hired on the spot.



Massachusetts Parole Board Job specialist Christopher Foster (left) stands with Parole Officer Ann Clegg (center) and Parole Board intern Kelly Manning at a Parole Board career fair this month. Snapchef, a culinary staffing company that had representatives at the job fair, has hired parolees who have and gone on to obtain chef jobs at some of the area's top restaurants.

## **New Member Joins Parole Board**

*(continued from p. 1)*

...and for celebrities. Today it employs about 4-5 full-time staff members, said Mr. Conrad.

Mr. Conrad has also worked for community-based organizations in the Cambridge area, helping poor mothers to get off welfare. And, in addition to being a father of "three wonderful young men" in their teens, he is a deacon at the Morningstar Baptist Church in Mattapan.

Mr. Conrad received a bachelor's degree from Curry College and a master's degree from Boston University, both in Criminal Justice.

He said he wanted to become a Board member because the position



presented the opportunity to help people and would allow him to draw on his multifaceted set of experiences in law enforcement, community service, and spirituality.

"I felt that I had a lot to offer because I have 23 years as a public servant," he said. In addition, his law enforcement background has made him a good judge of character, helping him to "recognize when people are really being honest with you."

Faith, in addition to law enforcement and social service, is an essential component of Mr. Conrad's personal and working life. "These three skills in culmination made me realize that I had the experience, background, and education" to be a member of the Parole Board," he said.

## Nearly 350 Mass ID Card Requests for Former Inmates in '07

Since January 1, 2007, the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles [RMV] has processed 345 requests for Massachusetts Identification Cards from parole officers on behalf of parolees and ex-offenders recently released from prison or houses of correction and processed at one of the eight Regional Reentry Centers. In the past, getting a Mass ID card proved to be a challenge for the formerly incarcerated due to their frequent lack of primary and secondary identification—a birth certificate, social security card, or utility bill. Begun as a pilot in September 2006, a partnership between the Parole Board and the RMV has enabled hundreds of former inmates to get identification.

The parole officer acts as a sponsor to the former inmate, attesting to his or her proof of Massachusetts residence. Using an official Parole Board form, the parole officer inputs the photograph of the former inmate and biographical information that has been verified via law enforcement databases. The documents are authenticated with a seal and, once a week, the former inmates are escorted by a parole officer to the RMV to apply for IDs.

Regular communication between the RMV and Parole is essential and ongoing. "It's a unique piece that we've figured out and that other states are still struggling with," said Kira Dunn, Director of Reentry for the Massa-



chusetts Parole Board. In addition to Parole Board Chairman Maureen E. Walsh, Ms. Dunn played a key role on the Parole side in founding the partnership.

While the program "took a little while to get it all going...it's been successful for everyone and helpful for the branches to have people pre-screened," said Anne Michalik, Administrative Assistant to the Deputy Registrar of Operations.

"When they go in," she said of former inmates, "they're going right through and being processed."

Getting identification can be a hurdle for ex-offenders and parolees

reentering the community. While many of us may take it for granted, ID is nonetheless required to complete the standard paperwork for the most basic and essential of tasks—starting a new job, applying for state and federal benefits, renting an apartment, and traveling. In Massachusetts, the RMV is responsible for issuing identification and requires all citizens to present primary and secondary forms of identification. Not all inmates possess these documents at the time of release.

Applying for replacement paperwork can take several months, valuable time that could be spent by the former inmate looking for a job and a place to live.

Under the RMV and Parole partnership, parole is responsible for assisting the RMV with screening and verifying the identity and home address of each parolee or ex-offender applying for a license by using national searchable law enforcement databases. The name of each applicant is matched to social security numbers and birth dates. Parolees and ex-offenders who are homeless or have multiple, irreconcilable identities are not eligible to obtain an ID through this program. RRC officers will verify the home address for all ex-offenders applying for ID cards.

Parole officers are required to fill out the RMV Identification Form, which replaces all documentation requirements, and serves as proof that the parole officer has already verified the parolee/ex-offender's identity. The person working at the branch office will verify that both the license application and the RMV ID form are complete, collect the license application and the RMV ID form, photocopy the parole officer's ID, and collect the fee.

## Urban Institute Study (continued from p. 2)

...which consists of interviews with 194 male recidivists in DOC custody and focus group meetings between Urban Institute researchers and eight parole officers from the Quincy area (Region 1), Mattapan area (Region 2), and Worcester area (Region 4) parole offices. The data will be incorporated into a report by Urban Institute researchers. The report is estimated to be ready by this winter.

Of the 194 inmates interviewed, 100 had been incarcerated for a new crime and 94 were parolees incarcerated for a technical violation. Staff from Guideline, a survey subcontractor, administered the 50-page questionnaires to inmates. While the main focus of the study was to identify factors leading to the moment of recidivism, it also investigated the nature of technical violations: do parole officers arrest parolees for technical violations as a preventative measure based on warning signs, or use technical violations as a way to re-arrest parolees they believe are criminally active but are unable to prove it? Do parolees who return to prison on technical violations tend to have more parole conditions than others? Parole violators were asked whether their parole officers used graduated

sanctions or if they even knew what graduated sanctions are.

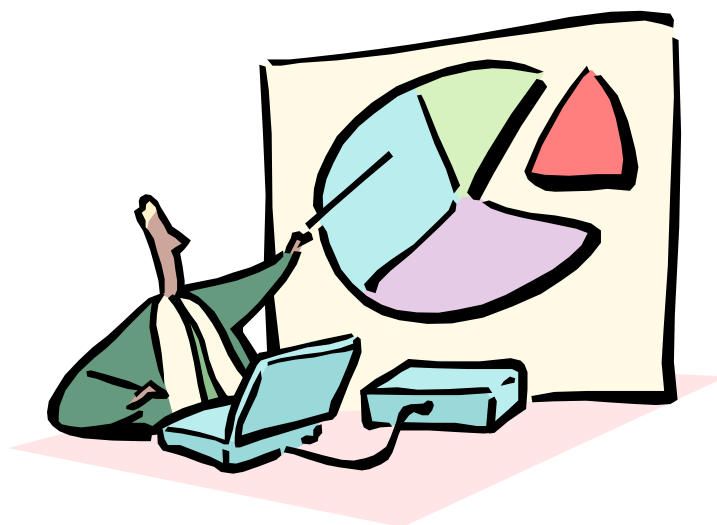
The questions were based in part on a 2005 study conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

release, shortly after release, and approximately one year after release.

On the parole side of the study, focus groups comprising eight parole officers

geographic comparison.

“Maureen [Parole Board Chairman Maureen E. Walsh] was great about wanting to be involved,” said Jenny W. Love Osborne of the Urban Institute. “The focus groups we had with parole officers were about getting information about the people’s success and failure on parole and the extent to which technical violations contribute to criminal behavior,” said Ms. Osborne.



and *The Criminal Recidivism Process*, a Canadian study published in 1997 by Edward Zamble and Vernon L. Quinsey, that emphasizes psychological factors and the mindset of the offender at the moment of recidivism. The Urban Institute study also focuses on the offender’s moods and problems that may have led up to the precipitating event, said Ms. Brooks.

The interviewing techniques in the study are similar to those used in “Returning Home,” a study conducted by the Urban Institute that involves field work in Texas, Illinois, and Ohio. Offenders were interviewed right before

identified the factors and challenges related to a parolee’s success or failure, their needs, and how parole officers respond to technical violations. The purpose was to determine how supervision can be improved in order to reduce recidivism. Urban Institute staff worked with Chairman Walsh to select the participating parole offices, deciding that, because most ex-offenders return to the Boston area, the Quincy and Mattapan offices should be involved. The Institute also opted to include the Worcester area office in the study to provide a